The Definitive Guide: OSINT Investigations on Crowdfunding Sites
Introduction

Crowdfunding is the process of fundraising money from a group or groups of people. During a crowdfunding campaign, a person, business, or organization raises capital from a large group of people rather than a single or small number of investors.

Crowdfunding enables groups and people who don’t have access to sources of large amounts of capital, like investors or bank loans, to raise money to fund something.

Crowdfunding can be managed through dedicated crowdfunding platforms that enable individuals or businesses to raise funds from a large pool of individuals. Crowdfunding platforms enable “rewards” to be exchanged for money. Rewards can include the final items or services that are being funded at early bird prices or equity in the company, making up two of the three primary types; donation-based, rewards-based, and equity crowdfunding. For donation-based crowdfunding campaigns, as those are usually specific to health needs or charities, rewards aren’t usually offered.

Crowdfunding platforms include; Indiegogo, Kickstarter, Patreon, Wefunder, JustGiving, GoFundMe, Fundable, Crowdcube, Mightycause, and SeedInvest.

Terrorist groups, conspiracy theorists, and fringe groups have used crowdfunding platforms to raise funds when other mainstream social media platforms like Facebook have removed content. A French crowdfunding platform called Tipeee was
previously used by a French white supremacist network as a way to monetize their polarising content and disinformation.

It is possible to monetize disinformation and conspiratorial narratives and crime on crowdfunding platforms both indirectly and directly. Campaigns may be posted directly by groups, stating their purpose outright and requesting funding. Alternatively, campaigns may be indirect, with links to other platforms included in the description. There may also be circumstances where a false product that will never exist is used to mask the true reason for fundraising. Finally, legitimate campaigns with real products to be sold may be crowdfunded to fund criminal groups and planned criminal activity.

Crowdfunding campaigns carry the risk of money laundering and can also be created to collect money for counterfeit and non-fraudulent companies. According to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, over a five-year period, $28 million worth of money laundering was reported on crowdfunding websites. It is likely that a large proportion of money laundering on crowdfunding websites goes undetected and unreported.

One possible modus operandi is for criminals to drain stolen credit cards, converting the credit into cash. Creating an illegitimate crowdfunding campaign, a criminal can use stolen credit cards to ‘donate’ to themselves. To avoid detection, the criminal may even set up a large number of campaigns and donate small amounts to each. Crowdfunding platforms may be the only platform used to launder money or could be one small step within a layering campaign.

Previous crowdfunding platform crimes include an individual who raised $122,000 on Kickstarter to fund a new board game, before canceling the project and starting a business with the money raised. Similarly, a woman raised $1,000 by pretending her 5-year-old girl had cancer.

This guide will show you how to conduct OSINT investigations on crowdfunding platforms. We’ll discuss techniques for Indiegogo, Kickstarter, Patreon, Wefunder, JustGiving, and GoFundMe.

Locating Crowdfunding Content

Indiegogo

Indiegogo is an American crowdfunding website that enables creators to solicit funds for an idea, charity, or start-up business, primarily focused on tech and design projects. The site runs on a rewards-based system, meaning donors, investors, or customers who are willing to help to fund a project or product can donate and receive a gift, rather than an equity stake in the company.

Indiegogo has built-in search functionality that allows users to search for projects and project owners.

The Indiegogo search URL can be modified by editing ‘q=ooni’ within the URL https://www.indiegogo.com/explore/all?q=ooni.
Indiegogo also indexes its project pages. By entering the command site:indiegogo.com into a search engine, such as Google, you'll tell the search engine to only show you web pages that come from the website www.indiegogo.com. The ‘site:’ operator removes pages from any other website from the search results. We’ll start here to see the type of content that is available from the Indiegogo website. At the time of this writing, and from our browser specifically, there are 283,000 results from indiegogo.com in Google's index.

From these results, we can deduce that valuable search results include the terms /projects/ in their URLs. /individuals/ also appears within results, showing profiles for users, however, these results are very limited.

By appending /projects/ to the end of our first query, we are narrowing down the search results from 283,000 to 273,000. When searching using this operator string, Google will show us only posts from Indiegogo that their system has indexed. Adding any keyword after this query will allow you to search for keywords within Indiegogo content through Google without even visiting the site. When doing so you should enter your search string in quotation marks. As an example, when searching for the keyword “Ooni”, we can use the query site:www.indiegogo.com/projects/ "Ooni" to specify that which will reduce our results from 273,000 to 3.

Once you have located a project of interest, using either the built-in search functionality or a search engine, you can identify the project name, value raised, the number of backers, and project founder name. You can also view dedicated pages entitled story, FAQ, updates, and comments. The story page is the core projects page, which will show the description of the project posted by the project founder.
Each project within Indiegogo will have a **FAQ page**, where the project founder has answered questions about the project.

Each Indiegogo project will also have an **updates page**, where founders can provide updates to their backers on the progress of the project, including development, manufacturing, and delivery.
Indiegogo updates can also be extracted from the platform using the Indiegogo API, [https://www.indiegogo.com/private_api/campaigns/2545581/updates?page=1](https://www.indiegogo.com/private_api/campaigns/2545581/updates?page=1). To use this URL, you require the campaign ID and will need to update ‘page=1’ to the relevant page.

To locate the campaign ID, right-click on the project page and select ‘View Page Source’. Within the page source code, search for ‘og:url’, which will show you a URL ending in the campaign ID.

Indiegogo projects also have a comments page, where project backers and other logged-in Indiegogo members can comment on the project.

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At the top of each of the project pages, you can locate a link to the profile page for the project founder. Within comments pages, you can also locate a link to the profile page for individuals who have commented on the project. Clicking on a user’s name will redirect you to the profile page for the user.

From a user’s profile page, you can access their campaigns page, enabling you to view all of the current and previous projects that an account has posted.
Kickstarter

Kickstarter is an American crowdfunding platform whose stated mission is to "help bring creative projects to life". As of July 2021, Kickstarter has received nearly $6 billion in pledges from 20 million backers to fund 205,000 projects who are offered tangible rewards or experiences in exchange for their pledges. Kickstarter campaigns have included films, music, stage shows, comics, journalism, video games, technology, publishing, and food-related projects.

Kickstarter has built-in search functionality that allows users to search for campaigns and campaign owners, which can be found by clicking on the magnifying glass on the top-right hand corner of the webpage.
Alternatively, the dedicated Kickstarter search URL can be modified by editing ‘search&term=ooni’ within the URL https://www.kickstarter.com/discover/advanced?ref=nav_search&term=ooni to reflect the required search term. Any spaces in the search term should be written as ‘%20’.

Kickstarter also indexes its project pages. By entering the command site:kickstarter.com into a search engine, such as Google, you’ll tell the search engine to only show you web pages that come from the website www.kickstarter.com. The ‘site:’ operator removes pages from any other website from the search results. We’ll start here to see the type of content that is available from the Kickstarter website. At the time of this writing, and from our browser specifically, there are 1,840,000 results from kickstarter.com in Google’s index.

From these results, we can deduce that valuable search results include the terms /projects/ in their URLs. Kickstarter Project URLs include both the project founder name and the project name.

By appending /projects/ to the end of our first query, we are actually increasing the search results from 1,840,000 to 2,320,000. This number shows the number of results that Google could find within the search window, which means that it was able to find a large number of similar URLs within the short search time period. When searching using this operator string, Google will show us only posts from Kickstarter that their system has indexed, so any recently created projects are unlikely to appear. Adding any keyword after this query will allow you to search for keywords within Kickstarter content through Google without even visiting the site. When doing so you should enter your search string in quotation marks. As an example, when searching for the keyword “Oono”, we can use the query site:www.kickstarter.com/projects/ "Ooni" to specify that which will reduce our results from 2,320,000 to 325.

From these results, we can see the project founder name within the URL, tapaninaho.
Once you have located a project of interest, using either the built-in search functionality or a search engine, you can identify the project name, last updated date, value raised, the number of backers, and project founder name. You can also view dedicated pages entitled Campaign, FAQ, Updates, Comments, and Community. The Campaign page is the core project page, which will show the description of the project posted by the project founder.

Each project within Kickstarter will have an FAQ page, where the project founder has answered questions about the project.
Each Kickstarter project will also have an **updates page**, where founders can provide updates to their backers on the progress of the project, including development, manufacturing, and delivery.

Each Kickstarter project will also have a **comments page**, where project backers and other logged-in Kickstarter members can comment on the campaign.
Each Kickstarter project will also have a **community page**, which will show how many people have supported the campaign.

Each project founder and campaign backer in Kickstarter will have their own **profile page**. You can open a Profile page by clicking on the user's name in the Q&A section.
Once you have located a profile page, you can then access three relevant sub-pages. The first sub-page for profiles is the about page, which will give you the account holder’s biography and links to any websites.

From an account page, you can also access the account holder’s comments page, which will show you publicly visible comments made by the account on campaigns.
The final sub-page on an account holder’s profile page is the created page, which will show you all of the campaigns that the profile has created.
Patreon

Patreon is an American membership platform that enables content creators to establish and manage a subscription service. Through Patreon, creators and artists earn a monthly income by providing rewards and perks to their subscribers, such as photos, videos, and exclusive music.

Patreon has built-in search functionality that allows users to search for creators, who have created accounts to provide content in return for financial backing.

The Patreon search URL can be modified by editing ‘q=LivingAlongsideWildlife’ within the URL https://www.patreon.com/search?q=LivingAlongsideWildlife.

Patreon also indexes its campaign pages. By entering the command site:patreon.com into a search engine, such as Google, you’ll tell the search engine to only show you web pages that come from the website www.patreon.com. The ‘site:’ operator removes pages from any other website from the search results. We’ll start here to see the type of content that is available from the Patreon website. At the time of this writing, and from our browser specifically, there are 2,740,000 results from patreon.com in Google’s index.

Adding any keyword after this query will allow you to search for keywords within Patreon, such as a creator’s name. When doing so you should enter your search string in quotation marks. As an example, when searching for the keyword “LivingAlongsideWildlife”, we can use the query site:www.patreon.com "LivingAlongsideWildlife" to specify that which will reduce our results from 2,740,000 to 4.

Once you have located a creator of interest, using either the built-in search functionality or a search engine, you can view the creator’s page, where you can access membership levels and updates.
As Patreon is rewards-based, the majority of content within a Patreon creator’s profile page will not be available. However, creators will often have some content this is visible, such as images and written updates.
Wefunder

Wefunder is an online crowdfunding service that connects startups with investors. Wefunder uses a provision in the 2012 JOBS Act which allows non-accredited investors to purchase equity in early-stage private companies.

Wefunder has built-in search functionality that allows users to search for campaigns.

Wefunder appears to index campaign pages in a limited capacity. By entering the command `site:wefunder.com` into a search engine, such as Google, you’ll tell the search engine to only show you web pages that come from the website [www.wefunder.com](http://www.wefunder.com). The ‘site:’ operator removes pages from any other website from the search results. We’ll start here to see the type of content that is available from the Wefunder website. At the time of this writing, and from our browser specifically, there are only 110 results from wefunder.com in Google’s index.

Once you have located a campaign of interest you can view the campaign page, where you can view related details, financials, and updates.
Each campaign within Wefunder will have an overview section on the core campaign page.

Each campaign will also have a details page, which includes Financials, Risks, Directors, and Officers.

Each campaign will also have an updates page, where campaign founders can provide updates to their backers on the project.
Each campaign will also have a What People Say page, where Investors and Friends of the campaign can make supportive statements.

Each campaign will also have an Ask a Question page, where Wefunder members can ask the campaign creator questions.
Each Wefunder account has its own profile page, where you can view the User's name, description, interests, company information, why the user is on Wefunder, skills, investments, and shout-outs.
JustGiving

JustGiving is a UK-based global online social platform for giving, providing online tools and processing services to enable the collection of charitable donations.

JustGiving has built-in search functionality that allows users to search for campaigns, which can be found by clicking on the magnifying glass on the top-right hand corner of the webpage.

Alternatively, the dedicated JustGiving search URL can be modified by editing ‘q=Domino%27s’ within the URL https://www.justgiving.com/search?q=Domino%27s to reflect the required search term. Any spaces in the search term should be written as ‘%2520’, whilst apostrophes should be represented with ‘%27’.

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JustGiving also indexes its project pages. By entering the command site:www.justgiving.com into a search engine, such as Google, you’ll tell the search engine to only show you web pages that come from the website www.justgiving.com. The ‘site:’ operator removes pages from any other website from the search results. We’ll start here to see the type of content that is available from the JustGiving website. At the time of this writing, and from our browser specifically, there are 2,470,000 results from justgiving.com in Google’s index.

Adding any keyword after this query will allow you to search for keywords within JustGiving, showing only JustGiving pages that contain the specific word or phrase. When adding keywords, you should enter your search string in quotation marks. As an example, when searching for the keywords “Domino’s” or “Dominos”, we can use the query site:www.justgiving.com "Domino's" OR "Dominos" to specify that which will reduce our results from 2,470,000 to 407.

Once you have located a charitable campaign of interest, using either the built-in search functionality or a search engine, you can view the campaign page, where you see how much money has been raised and the campaign creator’s name.

From a campaign page, you can access the campaign creator’s profile page, which includes a biography, a list of team members, and a list of supported charities.
GoFundMe

GoFundMe is an American for-profit crowdfunding platform that allows people to raise money for events ranging from life events such as celebrations and graduations to challenging circumstances like accidents and illnesses.

GoFundMe has built-in search functionality that allows users to search for campaigns, which can be found by clicking on the magnifying glass on the top-left-hand corner of the webpage.
Within the search bar, you can search for a campaign name or campaign creator’s name.

The GoFundMe search URL can be modified by editing ‘q=Domino%27s’ within the URL https://www.gofundme.com/s?q=Domino%27s. Any spaces in the search term should be written as ‘+’, whilst apostrophes should be represented with ‘%27’.

GoFundMe also indexes its project pages. By entering the command site:www.gofundme.com into a search engine, such as Google, you’ll tell the search engine to only show you web pages that come from the website www.gofundme.com. The ‘site:’ operator removes pages from any other website from the search results. We’ll start here to see the type of content that is available from the Kickstarter website. At the time of this writing, and from our browser specifically, there are 5,620,000 results from gofundme.com in Google’s index.

Adding any keyword after this query will allow you to search for keywords within GoFundMe content to bring back pages containing the word or phrase. When doing so you should enter your search string in quotation marks. As an example, when searching for the keywords "Domino's" OR "Dominos", we can use the query site:www.gofundme.com "Domino’s" OR "Dominos" to specify that which will reduce our results from 5,620,000 to 739.

Once you have located a campaign of interest you can view the campaign page, where you can view related details, funds raised, and the campaign creator’s name.
GoFundMe has API links available for campaigns, which enable you to extract information from the platform. The Donation Details API link provides details of donations to a campaign, including name and amount. To use this API link, just update the URL of the campaign.

The Donation Count API link details the total count of donations within the campaign time window. To use this API link, just update the URL of the campaign.

The Campaign Count API link details the total number of donations, donors, hearts, etc. To use this API link, just update the URL of the campaign.
The **Campaign Comments API** link details the most recent comments made on a campaign. To use this API link, just update the URL of the campaign.

The **Campaign Updates API** link details the latest updates made to a campaign page. To use this API link, just update the URL of the campaign.

The **Campaign Photos API** link details the last updated date but appears not to show details of photos. To use this API link, just update the URL of the campaign.
Extracting Content

Extracting Photos

You can utilize the same technique to extract an image from each of the crowdfunding platforms discussed within this guide. Firstly, right-click on a page containing the relevant image and click ‘Inspect’. Once the Inspect window has opened, you then need to navigate to Network in the tab list at the top, before selecting the Img tab in the list of tabs below this. Within the list of Images, you will see posted update photos, user profile pictures, project photos. Within the Preview tab of any item in the list you can see a small preview of the image, as shown in the screenshot below from an Indiegogo page.

Within the Headers tab of an Image, you can view the URL for the full-size version of the image.
You can follow the same Inspect > Network > Img process on Kickstarter to extract an image.
You can follow the same Inspect > Network > Img process on Patreon:

You can follow the same Inspect > Network > Img process on Wefunder:

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You can follow the same Inspect > Network > Img process on JustGiving:

You can follow the same Inspect > Network > Img process on GoFundMe:
Extracting Comments

Using a Chrome Extension, you can easily extract comments and any other data from Crowdfunding sites. This is particularly useful on sites with Q&A pages, like Kickstarter and Indiegogo.

**Instant Data Scraper** can be downloaded from the Chrome store, which will install the extension on your chromium-browser.

To use Instant Data Scraper to download relevant posts, go to the top of the page and click on the Instant Data Scraper Chrome extension button. Clicking the button will result in a new window opening.

If the required text isn’t automatically selected then click on the ‘Try another table’ button and click on the browser page where the text you want to capture is. Ensure that Infinite Scroll is ticked on and click the ‘Start crawling button’, which will capture all of the data on the page.

You can extract the captured data in a CSV or XLSX file or you can copy the table to paste it into a report.

Creating Screen Captures

Using another Chrome Extension, you can easily capture any webpage on a Crowdfunding site as an image. In the event that any content or campaigns are deleted at a later time, this process will archive all of the information that was on the page at the time.
**GoFullPage** can be downloaded from the Chrome store, which will install the extension on your chromium-browser.

GoFullPage will capture full screenshots within any Crowdfunding platform, in PNG and PDF formats. Capturing the page as an image or PDF shows the evidence exactly how it was seen, whilst HTML downloads may change slightly in appearance depending upon which browser they are opened within. You might also find an image of the page useful for inclusion in reports or when sending files via email, rather than embedding an HTML/MHTML file into a document.

To use GoFullPage to screen capture a webpage, go to the top of the page and click on the GoFullPage Chrome extension button. Clicking the button will result in the extension capturing the current page as a single image. Once the process has concluded, a new browser window will open with the captured image, enabling you to save the image to your device.

**Automating your Investigations on Crowdfunding Sites**

Using a tool like Skopenow, you can automate each of the processes outlined in this guide to extract and analyze data and information from crowdfunding sites. Skopenow instantly and anonymously locates and archives social media accounts and posts, plots location history, flags actionable behaviors, and reveals hidden connections between individuals. Skopenow's automatic report builder will save you time organizing the analyzed intelligence into a court-ready report. Please reach out to sales@skopenow.com or visit www.skopenow.com/demo to schedule a demo and activate a 7-day free trial for qualified businesses.
WHO WE ARE.

FAQ
What is Skopenow?

Skopenow is a cloud-based search engine that uses public data to build analytical reports on people and businesses. We also provide an API and batch services.

Does Skopenow work overseas?

Yes. We are currently in North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

What do your reports include?

Social media content, surface web, deep web, dark web, consumer information, litigation history, heat maps, and relationship analytics. Meta and hash data is available for every piece of content.

How is Skopenow priced?

We are a SaaS business that charges by the total number of seats and search volume.

What kind of turn around do reports have?

Our reports are automated so the turnaround time is only a few seconds.

TRY US OUT
Visit Skopenow.com/try and sign up for our free 7-day pilot.

ABOUT

Skopenow was born in NYC on a sunny May afternoon in 2016. We provide fraud and threat intelligence to some of the largest organizations in the world. We are a venture backed Techstars company delivering actionable insight to over 20,000 users and 1,500 enterprise customers. Skopenow also works directly with many state and federal law enforcement agencies across the globe.

IMPORTANT FEATURES

Forensically Hashed Court Ready Reports
Social Media Text, Image, and Video Collections
Face Match
Consumer Record Identity Resolution
Dark Web to Surface Web Username Reconciliation
AI-Based Behavior and Object Recognition
Automated and Tailored Alerts
Collect in Anonymity

WHO USES SKOPENOW

Federal Law Enforcement
State and Local Police
Government Agencies
Attorneys
Global Security Teams
Private Investigators
Journalists

GET IN TOUCH

Feel free to call us at (800) 252-1437 or email us at info@skopenow.com. You can also live chat with a Skopenow team member for support and sales related questions.

Customer support is available from 9AM-6PM EST.